

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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R 110210Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1339

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 3937

E. O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT, TH

SUBJ: EMERGING PARTY STRUCTURE THROUGH THE EYES OF NORTHEAST
POLITICIANS

UDORN 64 ACTION BANGKOK AND INFO CHIANG MAI BEING REPEATED
FOR YOUR INFO:

C O N F I D E N T I A L UDORN 64

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TH

SUBJECT: EMERGING PARTY STRUCTURE THROUGH THE EYES OF NORTH-
EAST POLITICIANS

REFERENCE: UDORN 58

1. SUMMARY: RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH NORTHEAST POLITICIANS
INDICATE THAT WIDE RANGING CONSULTATIONS AND BARGAINING ARE
GOING ON AMONG FORMER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND PROSPECTIVE
CANDIDATES PRIOR TO FORMATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES. POLITICOES
AGREED THAT THERE ARE CURRENTLY SIX MAJOR POLITICAL GROUPINGS
WHICH MIGHT EVENTUALLY BECOME PARTIES. MOST OF THESE GROUPS
EXPECTED TO COALESCE AROUND PARTY LEADERS IN NEXT FEW MONTHS
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AFTER POLITICAL PARTY AND ELECTION LAWS PASSED. POLITICIANS

WE TALKED TO DOUBTED THAT ELECTIONS WOULD TAKE PLACE BEFORE OCTOBER OR NOVEMBER. NORTHEASTERNS IN PARTICULAR ARE TRYING TO FIND WAY TO MAXIMIZE THEIR POWER IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUT DIVISIONS AMONG THEMSELVES CAST DOUBT ON POSSIBILITY OF AN EXCLUSIVELY NORTHEAST PARTY. THEY AGREE THAT TO HAVE GREATEST VOICE IN NEXT GOVERNMENT THEY MUST ALLY THEMSELVES WITH PARTY LEADER OF NATIONAL STATURE. NEWSPAPER ARTICLES WHICH SUGGEST ALLIANCE BETWEEN NORTHEAST POLITICIANS AND PRASERT RUCHIRAWONG APPEAR TO BE PREMATURE. WHILE MUTUAL SOUNDING OUL IS TAKING PLACE, MEN WE TALKED TO DENIED THAT ANY SOLID ALLIANCE HAD BEEN ACHIEVED. END SUMMARY.

2. THE SIX POLITICAL GROUPS CITED WERE: 1. DOMECRATIC PARTY, 2. GROUP CONSISTING OF INTILLECTUALS, STUDENTS AND PROFESSORS, 3. COALITION OF SIX FORMER PARTIES HEADED BY EX-SISAKET MP THEP CHOTINUCHIT, 4. THE FREE PEOPLE GROUP PARTY NOW HEADED BY FORMER RATBURI MP THAWIT KLINPATHUM, 5. GROUP CONSISTING PRIMARILY OF FORMER NORTHEAST MPS, AND 6. GROUP HEADED BY MAJ GEN SIRI SIRIYOTHIN, FORMER SPEAKER OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. THERE WAS DISAGREEMENT AS TO THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE NORTHEAST GROUP. FORMER MAHA SARAKAN MP INDEPENDENT KIAT NAKAPONGSE SAID THAT NORTHEASTERNS WERE SERIOUS ABOUT FOUNDING A PARTY WHICH HAD CHANCE TO FORM A GOVERNMENT. HE INDICATED THAT THE FEB 23 MEETING HE ATTENDED AT KOSA HOTEL IN KHON KAEN WAS AN ATTEMPT TO LAY FOUNDATION FOR SUCH A PARTY. FORMER INDEPENDENT ROI-ET MP, DR. AMPHAN HIRANCHOTE WHO ALSO ATTENDED KOSA MEETING SAID, HOWEVER, THAT INABILITY OF NORTHEASTERNS TO UNITE AT MEETING CONVINCED HIM THEY WERE EVENTUALLY HAVE TO JOIN ONE OF THE MAJOR GROUPINGS. FORMER MAHA SPT PARTY MP BOONCHUAY ATTHAKORN AGREED WITH AMPHAN THAT EXCLUSIVELY NORTHEAST PARTY UNLIKELY. HE INDICATED THAT HE AND MANY OTHER FORMER SPT PARTY MEMBERS MIGHT JOIN THAWIT'S PARTY IF MAN OF PRIME MINISTER POTENTIAL WERE PERSUADED TO LEAD IT. IN THIS CONTEXT HE MENTIONED DEFENSE MINISTER THAWEE. NONE OF THE MEN WE TALKED WITH THOUGHT DEMOCRATIC PARTY HAD MUCH CHANCE OF ATTRACTING NORTHEAST CANDIDATES.

3. SEVERAL FORMER MP'S SAID THAT FORMER MINISTER OF COMMERCE PRASIT KANCHANAWAT, PROTEGE OF FIELD MARSHAL PRAPHAT, HAD MADE TRIP THROUGH THE NORTHEAST RECENTLY AND INDICATED THAT

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HE ALSO MIGHT FORM A POLITICAL PARTY.

4. AMPHAN OF ROI-ET SAID THAT NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS LINKING NORTHEAST MP'S WITH GEN PRASERT RUCHIRAWONG WERE PREMATURE. HE INDICATED THAT STORY MAY HAVE BEEN LEAKED TO PRESS BY FORMER KALASIN LIBERAL PARTY MP MRS. SOMPONG YOOHON TO SOUND OUT PRASERT. AMPHAN SAID HE WOULD WAIT UNTIL THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY APPROVED PARTY AND ELECTION LAWS BEFORE

COMMITTING HIMSELF TO A PARTY. HE DOUBTED THAT ANY OF THE EXISTING POLITICAL GROUPS WOULD COMMAND A MAJORITY IN NEXT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND FELT IT LIKELY THAT THAILAND WOULD END UP WITH COALITION GOVERNMENT. AMPHAN SAID THAT VILLAGERS OF ROI-ET HAD BEEN TAKING GREATER INTEREST IN POLITICS SINCE FORMER GOV PRAMOON ACCUSED OF INVOLVEMENT IN MURDER CASE LAST YEAR. THIS LED PEOPLE TO BELIEVE THAT RECOURSE AGAINST CORRUPT OFFICIALS POSSIBLE.

5. FORMER UBON SPT MP PRATHEEP THAONGKHAMSAE SHARED VIEW THAT NORTHEAST POLITICIANS WOULD EVENTUALLY JOIN OTHER PARTIES RATHER THAN FORMING NORTHEAST PARTY. HE ALSO SAID THAT MEETING HAD BEEN ORGANIZED BY FORMER CHACHOENGSAO MP BOONLERT LERTPREECHA ON MARCH 15 AT VIENGTAI HOTEL IN BANGKOK TO SOUND OUT SUPPORT FOR GEN PRASERT.

6. FORMER UBON MP AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY LEADER FONG SITTITHAM DESCRIBED CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION AS CHAOTIC. HE TOLD US HE WOULD NOT RUN FOR OFFICE BUT SAID HIS SONS YING AND WILAWORN WOULD RUN IN UBON AND NAKHON PHANOM RESPECTIVELY. FONG SAID HE WAS TIRED OF POLITICS AND WANTED TO DEVOTE HIS ENERGY TO RUNNING HIS SCHOOLS IN UBON. LATER SAME DAY, HOWEVER, FONG MET WITH FORMER UDORN SPT MP SWAENG PHIBOONSARAWUT. ACCORDING TO AMPHAN OF ROI ET AND SPT MP NOL THINNARAT OF KORAT, SAWAENG IS LEADING FORCE BEHIND RECENTLY ANNOUNCED NEW FORCE GROUP WHICH INCLUDES DR. KRASAE CHANAWONG, NLA MEMBER FROM KHON KAEN. AMPHAN FELT THT SAWAENG AND OTHER FORMER SPT MP'S WERE TRYING TO REMOVE TAINT OF BEING MEMBERS FORMER GOVERNMENT PARTY BY ALLYING WITH FRESH POLITICAL CANDIDATES. AMPHAN THOUGHT, HOWEVER, THAT KRASAE'S GROUP WOULD EVENTUALLY BE ABSORBED INTO ONE PARTY OR ANOTHER.

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7. ALL OF THOSE WE TALKED TO FAVORED ELECTION OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS BUT FELT THIS WAS SOME YEARS OFF. THEY ALSO ALL CRITICIZED INEPTITUDE OF STUDENTS WHO TRIED TO TEACH DEMOCRACY IN THE PROVINCES.

COMMENT: MOST NORTHEASTERN POLITICIANS APPEAR TO BE WAITING FOR APPROVAL OF PARTY AND ELECTION LAWS REQUIRING PARTY AFFILIATION BEFORE COMMITTING THEMSELVES TO PARTICULAR PARTY. WHEN LAWS ARE APPROVED, THEY EXPECTED TO ALLY WITH THE NATIONAL PARTY LEADERS WHOSE PLATFORM AND BANKROLL ARE MOST ATTRACTIVE. BROH-KAHN.
KINTNER

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